A Guide to the
JOHN B. NAIL COLLECTION, 1888-1928
Fisk University Archives

Processed by Uzoma Miller, Archival Assistant
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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

As the first fully paid Life Member of the N.A.A.C.P. in 1928, John B. Nail was a businessman who, along with his brother, established the Nail Brother's Saloon, Restaurant, and Pool & Billiard Parlor in Harlem New York in 1881. As a pioneer African-American proprietor, Nail expanded his exploits to include real estate in Harlem in the early part of the 20th century. Nail became active in advocating the protection of civil and human rights of African-Americans through organizational ties with the N.A.A.C.P., The Society for the Ethical Culture of New York, and the Pan-African Congress.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The John B. Nail Collection contains one box, and consists of three series. This collection documents Correspondence, Memorabilia and a Press Release regarding activity with civic, civil rights and educational groups, or institutions such as the N.A.A.C.P., The Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls, The Fourth Pan-African Congress and The Society for the Ethical Culture of New York. The John B. Nail Collection is valuable to researchers who are interested in N.A.A.C.P. work and Nail’s correspondence with Mary White Ovington, Aurther Spingarn, Robert Bagnall and James Weldon Johnson, professional colleagues, personal friends, and, in the case of Johnson, his son-in-law. In addition, correspondence with Mary McLeod Bethune appears as well.

Series I: Correspondence

The Correspondence series consist of two subseries: Personal and Professional. The Personal Correspondence consists mostly of letters written from Nail’s children, Jack and Grace, and personal friends such as Mary McLeod Bethune. The various organizational and institutional leaders identified above are represented in the Professional Correspondence. The majority of the Personal Correspondence reflects holiday and birthday greetings while the Professional Correspondence typically covers expressed gratitude for Nail’s contribution towards a particular cause or endeavor.

Series II: Memorabilia

The Memorabilia series encompasses nine subseries: Business Cards; Bereavement Greeting Cards; Best Dad in the World Greeting Cards; Birthday Greeting Cards; Christmas Greeting Cards; City Key; Lyrics; Programs; and Ribbons. This series contains greeting cards, the key to Atlantic City, lyrics from James Weldon and Rosamund Johnson’s “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” and a copy of a program of Packard Business College’s 1888 graduation exercises.

Series III: Press Release

The Press Release series contains an official N.A.A.C.P. announcement in 1924 whereby Nail’s wife is memorialized.
**BOX LIST**

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**Series I: Correspondence**

**Subseries I: Personal Correspondence**

2. Nail, John E., 1923, 1924, 1928
3. Ovington, Mary White, n.d.
4. Unidentified, 1926

**Subseries II: Professional Correspondence**

5. Bagnall, Robert W., 1928
7. Bethune, Mary McLeod, 1915
8. Darrow, Clarence, 1928
9. Johnson, James Weldon, 1928
10. Martin, Alfred W., 1915
12. Ovington, Mary White, 1928
13. Pan-African Congress Executive Committee, 1927
15. Spingarn, Aurthur B., 1928

**Series II: Memorabilia**

**Subseries I: Business Cards**


**Subseries II: Greeting Cards, Bereavement**

17. Washington, Mrs. Booker T., 1915

**Subseries III: Greeting Cards, Best Dad in the World**

18. Unidentified, n.d.

**Subseries IV: Greeting Cards, Birthday**


**Subseries V: Greeting Cards, Christmas**
22 Allison, Anne, n.d.
23 Bethune, Mary McLeod, n.d.
24 Boutte, Etnah & Mathieu, n.d.
25 McMann, Charlotte E., n.d.
26 Morgck, Brenda Ray, n.d.
27 Nail, Grace & Jack, 1914, 1923, 1925, 1927
28 Thompson, Jack, 1914
29 Unidentified, 1925
30 Unidentified, n.d.

Subseries VI: City Key

31 Atlantic City Key, n.d.

Subseries VII: Lyrics

32 "Lift Every Voice and Sing," James Weldon and J. Rosamond Johnson, n.d.

Subseries VIII: Programs

33 Packard Business College Graduation, 1888

Subseries IX: Ribbons

34 Mayor's Committee of Welcome to Homecoming Troops, n.d.

Series III: Press Release

35 "Maintains Membership in N.A.A.C.P. in Memory of Wife Who is Dead," 1924